



**DBHR** Division of Behavioral  
Health and Recovery

# Drug Court Strategic Plan



October 2011

This strategic plan was prepared by the staff  
of the Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery  
at the direction of the Criminal Justice Treatment Account (CJTA) panel.  
It was approved by a vote of 9 to 0 at the panel meeting on October 14, 2011.

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## **Drug Court Strategic Plan**

The Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery (DBHR) is pleased to present this Strategic Plan promoting the development of drug courts in the state of Washington. In 2009, DBHR received a grant from the federal Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) to:

- Develop a plan that assesses the needs of drug courts in Washington State.
- Explore ways of improving the coordination and communication between state agencies and drug courts.
- Promote the effectiveness of drug court.
- Improve the skills of drug court professionals through training opportunities.

DBHR worked with the Criminal Justice Treatment Account Panel (CJTA), along with representatives of the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC), the Office of the Attorney General, and the Washington Association of Drug Court Professionals (WSADCP) in developing this plan. The Center for Court Innovation (CCI), which is a technical assistance agency under contract with the BJA that specializes in court practices, assisted DBHR in the creation of the surveys and with the facilitation of the public meetings on the development of the plan.

Based on the input from the surveys and community meetings, the following areas were identified for inclusion in the strategic plan:

1. Coordination and Collaboration (pages 2-3)
2. Communication (pages 4-5)
3. Performance and Accountability (pages 6-8)
4. Professional Development (pages 9-10)
5. Expansion and Sustainability (pages 11-12)

The remainder of this document is divided into plans for each of these areas, including the goals, strategies, responsible parties, and initial timelines.

Appendix 1 is a list of the various meetings and surveys conducted by DBHR regarding the development of the plan.

Appendix 2 is a list of the Washington State laws and regulations relating to drug courts, comprehensive planning, and accountability including the applicable Revised Code of Washington (RCW), Washington Administrative Code (WAC), or state policy/plan.

Appendix 3 is the draft resolution referred to in the section on Coordination and Collaboration.

## Coordination and Collaboration

Washington State currently has 23 adult and 13 juvenile drug courts, as well as many other problem solving courts, such as veteran's and family treatment courts. The courts work with state partners such as AOC on court operations and DBHR, who provides funding for treatment to drug court clients. As more communities rely on these courts as alternatives to incarceration, the need to collaborate continues to grow.

Goal/Strategy for Coordination and Collaboration	Responsible Party – initial task(s)	Timeline
1. Foster a partnership between DBHR, AOC and WSADCP, including: a. Roles of each partner. b. Professional development for drug courts and their team members. c. Dissemination of best practices and national standards. d. Research and data analysis.	1. DBHR will arrange meeting(s) with AOC and WSADCP to discuss formation of the partnership and the role of each partner.	1. By December 1, 2011.
2. Develop an advisory group composed of representatives of DBHR, AOC, and WSADCP to oversee the implementation of this strategic plan.	2. DBHR will arrange meeting(s) with AOC and WSADCP to discuss formation of the advisory group.	2. By December 1, 2011.
3. Support the passage by the Board for Judicial Administration of the proposed Drug Court Resolution (Appendix 3). Once the resolution is adopted, work with other associations (such as Superior Court Judges, Public Defenders, and Prosecuting Attorneys) to determine their support for the resolution.	3. DBHR and AOC.	3. The resolution is under review by the Washington State Court of Appeals. A timeline cannot be established until that review is complete. Monitor progress monthly.

Goal/Strategy for Coordination and Collaboration	Responsible Party – initial task(s)	Timeline
4. Conduct surveys of the drug courts (first survey was July 2011) to identify issues common to courts, strategies for further collaboration, and technical assistance needs. See additional elements for the survey in the section titled “Performance and Accountability.”	<p>4. The Survey Committee (Note: several drug court coordinators volunteered to serve on this committee at the 7/8/11 Strategic Plan Work Group meeting) will assist DBHR with the development of surveys and will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop strategy for surveying and report out information to DBHR, AOC, WSADCP, and other interested parties.</li> <li>• Develop recommendations on items to include in the July 2012 survey.</li> <li>• Will review responses to the July 2012 survey; make recommendations for future surveys including if survey should be conducted annually or biennially.</li> </ul>	4. Committee to develop survey recommendation by 4/1/12 and DBHR to conduct survey by 7/1/12.
5. Contact the federally recognized tribes in Washington State to determine which tribes operate drug courts. Then contact those tribal courts in order to promote communication and collaboration with DBHR, AOC, and WSADCP.	5. DBHR and WSADCP.	5. By 12/1/11 DBHR will work with WSADCP to develop a strategy for contacting the federally recognized tribes.

## Communication

Drug court officials want to communicate with their peers. Thanks to AOC, over the last couple of years, drug court judges, coordinators, and others have been using listservs to compare practices and share solutions. The development of a WSADCP website has increased the avenues of exchange between courts. Courts are increasingly aware of the importance of communication to elected officials and other policy makers about the positive outcomes of drug courts, especially in reducing crime by successfully treating offenders. Strategies to maintain and accomplish these goals are included below.

Goal/Strategy for Communication	Responsible Party– initial task(s)	Timeline
1. Communication between state partners (DBHR and AOC) and drug courts: a. Maintain a directory of all the drug courts and other problem solving courts in Washington State, and listservs for judges, coordinators, and others, including treatment providers. b. Develop a website in conjunction with AOC, DBHR, and WSADP. Create linkages to AOC, DBHR, local, and national websites that have resources on drug courts. c. Share information on the effectiveness of drug courts (state/national research, best practice, local court outcome reports) with all drug courts in Washington.	1a. AOC (lead) and DBHR  1b. WSADCP  1c. DBHR, AOC, and WSADCP	1a – b. Ongoing; monitor progress on a calendar quarterly basis.       1c. Develop strategy for distribution by 12/1/11.

Goal/Strategy for Communication	Responsible Party– initial task(s)	Timeline
<p>2. Communication with general public and policy makers:</p> <p>a. With data based on measures developed under Topic Area – Performance and Accountability.</p> <p>b. Collect client/practitioners stories regarding the effectiveness of drug courts.</p> <p>c. Educate the general public and elected officials by publishing new articles, newsletters, and research on the effectiveness of drug courts</p> <p>d. Working in partnership with other community coalitions such as local Drug Demand Reduction teams, High Intensity Drug Traffic (HIDTA) task forces, youth alliances, Drug Free Community Coalitions, human services round tables, and law and justice councils.</p>	<p>2a. DBHR and DSHS Research and Data Analysis (RDA) will develop reports based on agreed upon measures and cost benefit information.</p> <p>2b. Drug courts will write up client and practitioners stories for use locally.</p> <p>2c. WSADCP will use research information, client/practitioner stories to educate the general public and elected officials.</p> <p>2d. Local drug courts to form partnerships.</p>	<p>2a. Ongoing; with data cost benefit to be completed by 6/1/12.</p> <p>2b. Ongoing. Courts to develop.</p> <p>2c. Ongoing, WSADCP will develop strategy for distribution of information to general public and elected officials.</p> <p>2d. Ongoing</p>

## Performance and Accountability

Graduate testimonials and local research speak to the effectiveness of drug courts. However, as the number of drug courts and other problem solving courts has increased nationally there have been many questions raised about how to measure their effectiveness in terms of changed lives, reduced crime, and as a cost effective alternative to incarceration. With the recent publication of the National Institute of Justice's "Multi-site Drug Court Evaluation" there is more evidence that certain practices can improve the effectiveness of drug courts.

One of the greatest challenges facing Washington's drug courts and the state partners is how to use the information from the national research to measure and demonstrate drug court success while still allowing for the flexibility and autonomy each court needs to operate within their community. The goals below are designed to assist the courts in developing performance measures based on the national research and best practices. When a core set of measures is collected at the local level, all courts may benefit from an aggregated representation of statewide data. The Professional Development section below also addresses performance issues.

Goal/Strategy for Performance and Accountability	Responsible Party– initial task(s)	Timeline
1. As part of the AOC's annual update of the Problem Solving Court Directory, identify new drug courts using the description of problem solving courts listed on the AOC website.	1. AOC to conduct annual update in consultation with DBHR and Survey Committee. (Note: AOC issued this request on October 1, 2011.)	1. Update information annually in October.
2. Clarify drug court/problem solving court operational structures and common practices using the stakeholder survey.	2. Survey Committee (established under Coordination and Collaboration, item 4) to collect this information as part of survey.	2. Survey Committee to develop survey recommendation by 4/1/12 and DBHR to conduct survey by 7/1/12.



Goal/Strategy for Performance and Accountability	Responsible Party– initial task(s)	Timeline
<p>3. Encourage common operational standards by:</p> <p>a. Collecting information by survey.</p> <p>b. Collating information and disseminating to all drug courts.</p>	<p>3a. Survey Committee to collect this information as part of survey.</p> <p>3b. Survey Committee to compile information from survey.</p>	<p>3a. Survey Committee to develop survey recommendation by 4/1/12 and DBHR to issue survey by 7/1/12.</p> <p>3b. Survey Committee to compile results from survey and disseminate information by 12/1/12.</p>
<p>4. Encourage the incorporation of drug court 10 Key Components or NADCP Practices/Guidelines planning documents, grant solicitations, resource tools and training events. (Note: BJA is working to develop national guidelines by summer of 2013.)</p>	<p>4. DBHR, AOC, WSADCP, CJTA panel, and drug court coordinators.</p>	<p>4. Annually.</p>
<p>5. Recommend the incorporation of research-based best practices into the operation of all drug courts and encourage each drug court to conduct evaluations in order to improve their performance.</p>	<p>5. DBHR, AOC, and WSACDP will present information at events such as October 2011 Annual Drug Court Conference, website, and national training events and also through federally funded demonstration projects.</p>	<p>5. Ongoing as part of conferences, trainings, and the WSADCP website update. Include in federal grant applications when applicable.</p>
<p>6. Encourage state and local partners to adopt performance and data collection standards consistent with federal standards for drug courts. Standards protocol to be established.</p>	<p>6. DBHR will work with RDA, AOC, and WSADCP to identify performance measurement standards such as frequency of judicial interaction and recidivism rates.</p>	<p>6. To be determined, but target is 9/1/12.</p>

Goal/Strategy for Performance and Accountability	Responsible Party– initial task(s)	Timeline
7. Identify national treatment performance measures that might be included in contracts and incorporate where appropriate (such as by DBHR for CJTA purchased treatment services).	7. DBHR with CJTA Panel will discuss and adopt new treatment performance measurements for next funding cycle.	7. By 6/1/13.
8. Analysis of performance measures data to identify strengths and challenges common to drug court programs based on the research of drug court best practices (Goal 5) and performance and data collection standards (Goal 6).	8. RDA in conjunction with DBHR, AOC, and WSADCP.	8. By 6/1/13.
9. Ensure adherence to best practices through training efforts and reviews of county implementation plans.	9. DBHR	9. Biennially, beginning 7/2012.

## Professional Development

DBHR and its partners believe in the value of ongoing education for each member of the drug court team (judges, prosecutors, public defenders, law enforcement officers, treatment professionals, and corrections officers) and other justice system personnel to keep them abreast of the latest developments in the related fields of substance abuse, mental health, and the criminal justice system as they relate to drug courts. Additionally, the healthy functioning of the team itself is critical to the dynamic nature of the drug court process, so it is a primary ongoing development issue.

Goal/Strategy for Professional Development	Responsible Party– initial task(s)	Timeline
1. Disseminate materials on best practices for all aspects of drug court operations through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Webinars and other training events.</li> <li>• Peer-to-peer mentoring.</li> <li>• Website with links to national training opportunities.</li> <li>• Court personnel orientation.</li> </ul>	1. Coordination by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. WSADCP integrating into the Associations' Training Strategy and annual conference. DBHR and WSADCP have arranged for the Center for Court Innovation (CCI) to conduct training at October 21, 2011, drug court conference.</li> <li>b. DBHR (in consultation with AOC and WSADCP) through their drug court technical assistance grant-sponsored training events.</li> <li>c. Individual courts through BJA technical assistance request process.</li> </ul>	1a. 10/21/11 – Initial training will occur at Washington's annual drug court conference.  1b. Monitor quarterly.  1c. Courts to request as needed.
2. Identify and train a cadre of drug court team members to serve as facilitators for training events with other local drug courts. (This is also part of a training plan developed between DBHR and BJA).	2. CCI will train these facilitators in conjunction with the 2011 drug court conference. Local courts will be encouraged to choose from a list of topics, including a self-assessment process. DBHR will coordinate trainings with local courts.	2. Each facilitator team will be encouraged to provide training support to at least two courts before the BJA funding supporting this strategy ends 8/31/12.

Goal/Strategy for Professional Development	Responsible Party– initial task(s)	Timeline
3. Ensure training is meeting the needs of local courts.	3. Survey Committee ( ) will review prior training needs survey, develop and conduct new survey, and prepare recommendations.	3. Annually, or as deemed appropriate by the Survey Committee, beginning in July 2012.
4. Train drug courts on how to connect with recovery oriented communities for graduating clients and use technology to identify and map recovery supportive services	4. DBHR will provide drug courts with the information on recovery-oriented support services including: a. Information from federal demonstration projects such as Washington’s Access to Recovery (ATR) and the Washington Court and Recovery Enhancement System (WA-CARES) project. b. Strategies on working with recovery and faith-based communities. c. Strategies on how to map community resources.	4. 12/1/11; assess annually.
5. Sustain training with non-government funding sources including resources available from local groups such as Drug Demand Reduction teams, High Intensity Drug Traffic (HIDTA) task forces, youth alliances, Drug Free Community Coalitions, human services round tables, and law and justice councils.	5. DBHR, WSADCP, and local courts.	5. Ongoing.

## Expansion and Sustainability

In concert with the vision of national drug court leadership, there should be a drug court within reach of every person in need in Washington State. It has been shown beyond a reasonable doubt that drug courts significantly reduce drug use and crime and do so with substantial cost savings. Given the number of people who commit crimes and who have a drug abuse problem, expansion of this resource makes sense. In order to see the expansion and maintenance of drug courts, this section of the strategic plan includes promotion in the forms of advocacy and education. In light of the current financial situation, it is of utmost importance that the use of the criminal justice treatment account (CJTA) is maximized. Additionally, each local jurisdiction might consider services funded by the 1/10 of 1% local sales tax option as described in RCW 82.24.460. Outreach to non-governmental entities may result in support for public policies, and could also result in financial support.

Goal/Strategy for Expansion and Sustainability	Responsible Party– initial task(s)	Timeline
1. Publish results from courts (based on the research of drug court best practices and performance and data collection standards developed as part of Goals 5 and 6 of Performance and Accountability).	1. WSADCP will work with DBHR and AOC to obtain outcome data. WSADCP will determine how to use this information for the purpose of advocating for increased funding for drug courts.	1. WSADCP to develop timeline, ensuring that most recent data is widely distributed.
2. Develop earned media opportunities and encourage local drug court professionals to speak to legislative, administrative bodies, and other organizations through Speaker's Bureau, Prosecutors' Association, County Associations, service groups, and the private sector.	2. WSADCP and local drug courts.	2. Ongoing.
3. Disseminate appropriations to local communities as required by RCW 70.96a.350, Criminal Justice Treatment Account (CJTA).	3. CJTA Panel develops funding formula. DBHR is the fiscal agency for the distribution of the funds.	3. Biannually, upon legislative appropriation.
4. Disseminate information on the effectiveness of drug court services to communities considering the adoption of local sales tax option for funding problem solving courts.	4. WSADCP will work with DBHR and AOC to obtain research and outcome data. WSADCP and DBHR will determine how to use this information and develop a strategy for dissemination.	4. WSADCP and DBHR to develop timeline.

Goal/Strategy for Expansion and Sustainability	Responsible Party– initial task(s)	Timeline
5. Identify grant-writing support and capacity for local communities.	5. WSADCP will make this information available on website, but local communities or agencies are responsible for grant writing.	5. WSADCP to develop timeline for updates to website.
6. Review legislation and take advantage of sentencing policy changes to offer drug court options when these opportunities arise.	6. WSADCP monitor and report when appropriate to drug courts.	6. Annually, during regular legislative session.
7. Promote the effectiveness of drug courts by continuing to strengthen political sustainability through communication and advocacy.	7. WSADCP will work with its membership to promote the effectiveness of drug courts.	7. Ongoing.

Appendix 1– Chronology of meetings held and surveys conducted pertaining to the development of the Strategic Plan.

January 15, 2010	Criminal Justice Treatment Account (CJTA) Panel meeting
April 9, 2010	Strategic Plan Work Group meeting
June 15, 2010	Strategic Plan Work Group member survey
June 18, 2010	Drug Court and Problem Solving Coordinators meeting
July 9, 2010	Strategic Plan Work Group meeting
October 15, 2010	Report to Superior Court Judges' Association, Therapeutic Court Committee meeting, on status of the strategic plan
January 14, 2011	Strategic Plan Work Group meeting
April 8, 2011	Strategic Plan Work Group meeting
May 2, 2011	Report to Superior Court Judges' Association, Therapeutic Court Committee meeting, on status of the strategic plan
June 15, 2011	Statewide Drug Court Survey
July 8, 2011	Strategic Plan Work Group meeting
August 19, 2011	Presentation of Drug Court Survey results webinar
August 26, 2011	Strategic Plan public forum held as a webinar
September 30, 2011	Strategic Plan public forum held as a webinar
October 3, 2011	Strategic Plan public forum held as a webinar
October 4, 2011	Review of strategic plan at Superior Court Judges' Association, Therapeutic Court Committee meeting
October 14, 2011	Combined CJTA/Strategic Plan Work Group meeting

## Appendix 2 – List of Washington State laws and regulations relating to drug courts, comprehensive planning, and accountability.

### **Role of local government to create drug courts:**

- RCW 2.28.170 – Drug Courts
- RCW 26.12.250 - Problem solving courts
- RCW 82.14.460 - Sales and use tax for chemical dependency or mental health treatment services or problem solving courts

### **Governor's Office:**

- EXECUTIVE ORDER 10-07 - Directive to incorporate performance-based measures into contracts

### **Role of Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC):**

- RCW 2.56.030(4) -AOC to collect and compile statistical data and make reports on court business.
- RCW 2.56.030(10) AOC to administer programs and standards for the training and education of judicial personnel.
- Tie to Judicial Branch Policy Goal No. 1 (Fair & Effective Administration of Justice in All Cases).
- (Proposed) Board for Judicial Administration (BJA) Resolution in Support of Problem Solving Courts.
- Recommendation 7 of Race and Criminal Justice Task Force (Advocating expansion of Problem Solving Courts).

### **Role of Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery (DBHR):**

- RCW 70.96a.050 – Duties of the Department of Social and Health Services (Items 1, 3, 4, 8, 9, 17)
- RCW 70.96a.055 – Drug Courts
- RCW 70.96a.350 – Criminal Justice Treatment Account
- DBHR's 2009 – 2013 Strategic Plan:

Goal 3: Assure delivery of a full range of high quality chemical dependency treatment services to adults and youth who are eligible and in need of them.

Objective 3: Plan for, ensure delivery, and monitor the quality of chemical dependency treatment services provided to offenders.

Strategies:

- a. Plan for the Delivery of Treatment Services for Offenders Using the DASA/County Strategic Planning Process. Work with local authorities to conduct an assessment of offenders' need for chemical dependency treatment, and develop treatment services to meet that need in SFY 2009-2013.
- b. Continue Implementation of Drug Sentencing Reform. Continue to work with local authorities in implementing judicially supervised substance abuse treatment in lieu of incarceration, and work with county alcohol and drug coordinators and treatment providers to improve criminal justice-related treatment data.
- c. Support Drug Courts and Other Judicially Supervised Models. Promote public safety and reduce substance abuse and re-arrest among nonviolent, chemically dependent offenders by integrating alcohol/drug treatment services with judicial system case processing, monitoring, supervision, mandatory drug testing, sanctions, and other administrative services.



**RESOLUTION BY  
THE BOARD FOR JUDICIAL ADMINISTRATION (BJA)  
ON DRUG COURTS AND OTHER  
PROBLEM SOLVING COURTS**

**At its meeting on <Month><Date>, <Year>, the Board for Judicial Administration approved the following Resolution in support of Drug Court and Other Problem-Solving Court Principles, Methods and Funding.**

**For purposes of this Resolution, Drug Courts are particularly emphasized in light of the central place they occupy in that class of related court programs which have, in the past two decades, come to be known under the general name of Problem Solving Courts.<sup>1</sup> This Resolution is intended to set forth the BJA's strong support for Problem Solving Courts in general and Drug Courts in particular.**

**Whereas, the Board for Judicial administration recognizes the following:**

- 1) Drug Courts have proven to be a highly effective strategy for reducing alcohol or other drug use and recidivism among criminal offenders with chemical dependency and addiction problems.
- 2) In addition to Drug Courts, the principles and methods of Problem Solving Courts have been shown to offer a very promising strategy for addressing a wide variety of other case types in which addiction, mental health or other behavioral issues are a significant causative factor.
- 3) There is evidence of broad support, both in Washington and other states, for the principles and methods commonly used in Problem Solving Courts, including ongoing judicial leadership; integration of treatment services with judicial case processing; close monitoring of and immediate response to behavior; multidisciplinary involvement; and collaboration with community-based and government organizations.
- 4) Through the efforts of the National Association of Drug Court Professionals (NADCP), the National Drug Court Institute, the National Center for State Courts and others, drug court research has resulted in many areas of consensus regarding the best practices for drug courts.
- 5) The Race and Criminal Justice Task Force has recommended that Washington Courts expand the use of Therapeutic (i.e., Problem Solving) Courts as one way to address racial disparity in the administration of justice in criminal cases.

**In light of the foregoing the Board hereby resolves as follows:**

- 1) To support and encourage the development and expansion of Problem Solving Courts in Washington.
- 2) To advocate for adequate funding for these courts.
- 3) To encourage and support appropriate training for judicial officers and staff on the principles and methods of Problem Solving Courts.
- 4) To ensure the education of law students, lawyers and judges concerning the existence and principles of Problem Solving Courts.
- 5) To support the identification of and adoption of best practices in Problem Solving Courts.
- 6) To promote the consistent collection of data on Problem Solving Courts to enable effective evaluation and monitoring of Problem Solving Court outcomes and performance.

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<sup>1</sup> Problem Solving Courts are also often referred to as Therapeutic Courts.